

SPORTS

THE BATTALION

A&M soccer taking on two

Aggies host New Mexico on Friday, visit Baylor Sunday

BY REECE FLOOD
The Battalion

The Texas A&M soccer team will try to improve upon its 7-3 record in a non-conference home game against New Mexico and a road game against Big 12 Conference rival Baylor this weekend.

The Aggies will host the New Mexico Lobos (5-5) Friday at 7 p.m. at the Aggie Soccer Complex. The Aggies said they can defeat their non-conference foe, but know that New Mexico is more than capable of coming out of the game with a win.

"They're a good team," said junior forward Anne Tamporello. "We played them last year. We ended up beating them, but they're one of those teams that, if we're not on the top of our game, they could snatch a win right from underneath us."

Sophomore forward Heather Ragsdale said the game against a non-conference team comes at a good time, giving the Aggies one more game to prepare for a conference rival.

"I think New Mexico will give us a chance to continue on with what we're doing right now," Ragsdale said, "and help us get ready for Baylor, which is a big conference game."

The game against Baylor (4-4, 1-1 in Big 12) is a big one for the Aggies every year. Baylor has a 3-2 lead in the all-time series — two of the five games were decided in overtime.

Last year, the Aggies traveled to Waco and lost a close one to Baylor, 1-0. On Sunday, A&M will travel to Waco again for a 1 p.m. showdown with the Bears.

Ragsdale said she enjoys the rivalry that has developed between the two conference teams.

"It's an ongoing rivalry," Ragsdale said. "They're a good team, so it makes it more fun."

The rivalry between Baylor and A&M was cemented in 1997 when the Bears defeated the Aggies in a controversial game at the Baylor Soccer Field. A Baylor shot skimmed the side of the net at the 23:46 mark in the first half.

It was ruled a no-goal and play continued until the linesman and head referee stopped play, discussed the shot and overturned the original ruling, giving Baylor a goal. Regulation time ended with a 1-1 tie and Baylor went on to win in overtime.

Tape reviews showed later the shot hitting the outside of the net, proving the goal should not have counted.

"Three years ago they had the ghost goal," Tamporello said. "Ever since then, it's always been a big game for us, every time. I'm sure it is for them too."

The players are not the only ones who recognize the Baylor game as a big one. A&M assistant soccer coach Phil Stephenson said that playing in Waco will be a difficult challenge for the Aggies, especially considering none of the current members of A&M's team have ever won in Waco.

"It's a huge, huge game," Stephenson said. "When we play up there, they have a great home-field advantage. We expect to see their best performance of the season. We have to match it and beat it."

Stephenson said A&M is prepared to travel, already having played tough road games this season. The Aggies have defeated 7th-ranked Hartford, 17th-ranked Harvard and 18th-ranked Florida all on the road.

"We've got some good road games under our belt," Stephenson said. "Basically we've bloodied the team. The team is used to playing with hostile crowds, a field not like ours, not eating at Jason's Deli and those things."



CODY WAGES/THE BATTALION

Junior midfielder Michelle Royal and the Aggies face the New Mexico Lobos and Baylor Bears this weekend. The Aggies have never beaten the Bears in Waco.

Challenge on tap for Aggie volleyball team

A&M travels north to face the No. 1 Nebraska Cornhuskers

BY BREE HOLZ
The Battalion

As the Texas A&M volleyball team prepares to go to war with the No. 1-ranked University of Nebraska, it is trying to focus on its own execution and team unity. The fact that the Aggies have never won on Nebraska's home floor does not worry them.

"It's always a close game when we play there," said senior middle blocker Heather Marshall. "They've got a great crowd like we do, so it's always like playing in front of the 12th Man. Hopefully, we'll rise to the occasion and get a win there."

First serve is set for 2 p.m. on Saturday at the Lincoln Center.

Defending Big 12 champion Nebraska is currently 11-0 (4-0 Big 12) and holds an all-time series lead over A&M, 11-6. Last season, the Ag-

gies defeated the Huskers at home, 3-2, but lost to Nebraska in Lincoln, 1-3.

The Huskers return four starters from last year's squad that finished at 27-6 and 17-3 in conference play. They advanced to the NCAA tournament but were defeated in the third round by the University of California-Santa Barbara.

A&M coach Laurie Corbelli said Nebraska is a well-rounded team with experienced returners.

"They have a lot of size and athleticism, and they are very smart players," she said. "They're not up and down; they don't lose a lot of points at once, and they don't make a lot of errors."

Junior outside hitter Erin Gibson said the team has to focus on itself in order to be successful.

"Our focus is on what A&M does," Gibson said. "We can't be concerned with what Nebraska is going to do. We have to go out and play like we have nothing to lose."

Because of Nebraska's strong front row, the Aggies have been working to improve their defense.

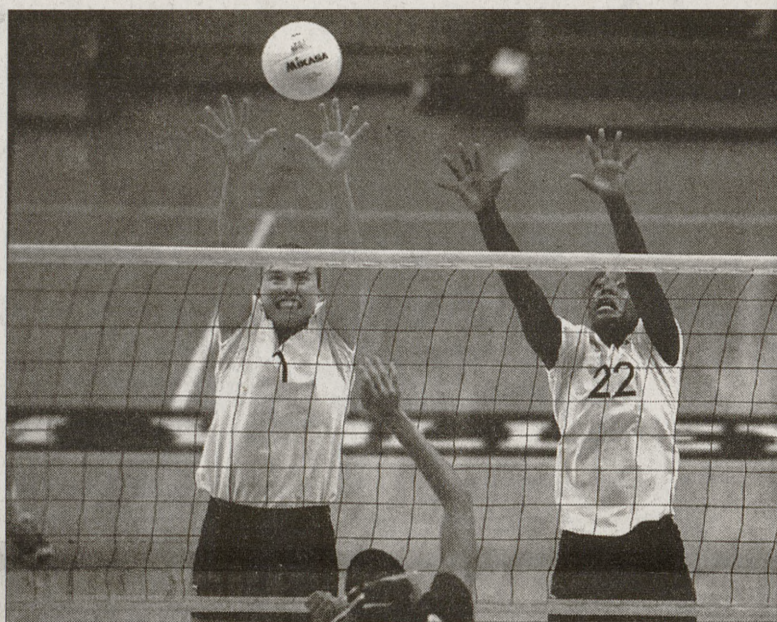
"Our blocking and coverage are big concerns for us," said junior outside hitter Michelle Cole. "But as long as we do what we know how to do, we'll be all right."

A&M is not intimidated by top-ranked teams. Earlier this season, the Aggies faced then-No. 1 UCLA.

"We look at it as an advantage," Marshall said. "We've seen competition like this before, this caliber of a team. It's just a matter of meeting the challenge once again."

Corbelli said confidence will be key for A&M.

"As long as we strongly believe we can go in there and beat them, it will happen," Corbelli said. "I've seen this team do some amazing things, and I think defeating Nebraska could be one of them."



CODY WAGES/THE BATTALION

Freshman middle blocker Carol Price (left) and junior outside hitter Michelle Cole (right) lead the Aggies to Lincoln for a showdown with NU.

Sydney 2000

Highlights:

Third time not a charm: American sprinter Gail Devers, favored to win the gold in the 100-meter hurdles for the last three Olympics, will not get her medal for the third straight Games. Devers tore her left hamstring in her semifinal race Wednesday in Sydney.

Venus red hot: U.S. tennis player Venus Williams won Olympic gold Wednesday in straight sets over Russia's Elena Dementieva. The win pushed Williams' winning streak to 32 matches, and she is only the second player to win the U.S. Open and Olympics in the same year.

Schedule:

TV Schedule: Thursday, September 28, 2000

NBC:

- 10 a.m. to Noon — Tennis, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Track
- 7 p.m. to Midnight — Equestrian, Track & Field, Gymnastics, Synchronized Swimming
- 12:41 to 2:11 a.m. — Basketball

MSNBC:

- 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. — Volleyball, Basketball, Soccer

CNBC:

- 5 to 9 p.m. — Boxing, Wrestling, Tennis

Olympic Aggies

Heard's dream still alive: Former A&M sprinter Floyd Heard is still in pursuit of an Olympic medal. Heard qualified for the third round in the 200-meter Wednesday in Sydney.

Sykora set for next match: Former A&M volleyball player Stacy Sykora and the U.S. team face Russia in a semifinal match on Thursday.

Medal Watch:



	Gold	Silver	Bronze
USA	29	15	25
CHN	25	14	15
RUS	18	17	21
AUS	13	21	14
FRA	12	13	8

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